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SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN VIEWS IN ADVANCE OF THE OCTOBER 13 GAERC

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(SBU) Polchief discussed reftel points October 8 with Klaus Famira, MFA European correspondent. Famira provided the following information on the October 13 GAERC agenda:

-- Georgia: EU representatives will discuss the deployment of the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM). Famira acknowledged that EU leaders are concerned that Russia has not allowed EUMM access to Abkhazia or South Ossetia. He said the French may press Russian President Medvedev on this issue at the November EU-Russia Summit. Famira said the GOA would likely not provide any new bilateral assistance for Georgia, though this was still under consideration.

-- Zimbabwe: Discussion of Zimbabwe will probably be very brief. Participants may discuss how the change of leadership in South Africa influences the political dynamics.

-- Belarus: Famira said the "balanced view" on Belarus reflected in reftel points is very close to the EU position. The OHDIR report on the elections paints a "grim picture." At the same time, however, the Government of Belarus allowed OHDIR to observe the elections, permitted opposition candidates to register, and released political prisoners. President Lukashenka is looking to move closer to the West to offset his ties to Moscow. Famira said GAERC participants are not expected to reach any decisions on sanctions. He said EU leaders are not considering changing the legal framework regarding Belarus, but rather discussing ways of making gestures to encourage a more Western orientation.

-- Uzbekistan: The GOA could support a measure to lift the visa ban against Uzbek officials, but would insist that the arms embargo remain intact.

-- Informal Oct. 30 GAERC: Famira said the French may discuss plans for an informal GAERC to be held October 30 in Paris to discuss transatlantic relations, following up on the discussion at the September 5-6 Gymnich. He said the GOA is not sure why the French want to continue with this project. The EU-U.S. relationship is sound, and is far closer and more extensive than any other EU relationship. Austrian officials do not see the value in holding another discussion that would focus on only a few of the many areas of transatlantic cooperation, and might choose not to attend, he said.
GIRARD-DICARLO